Any packaging container of reasonable dimension can be employed for the gel preparation consistent with commercial custom. As described above, however, the container preferably is transparent to allow a viewer to perceive the texture and structure of the gel and the distribution of any solids suspended therein. Glass containers are preferred although other transparent container materials also may used to achieve the desired result.

As the container volume increases, the chilling time required to obtain the desired gel structure also increases. The maximum preferred container size is in the range of about 100 to 500 ml to promote effective cooling of the gel.

The botanicals may be selected so that they retain their natural appearance after they are immersed in the gel mixture. Botanicals containing water-soluble dyes or preservative are unsuitable for use as the dyes and preservatives tend to cause bleeding of the botanicals into the gel. This bleeding may be avoided by using botanicals without dyes or preservatives. The botanicals also may be bleached before they are added to the gel, either to remove natural color that may tend to bleed into the gel or to create a subtle, ethereal effect. Besides bleaching, the botanicals also may be treated, for example, by freeze-drying them or coating them with a moisture-resistant sealer before they are added to the gel mixture. The botanicals thus are or are made to be color-fast, which term is meant to include botanicals as described or as treated above.

EXAMPLE

A transparent yellow gel containing peach slices suspended therein was prepared in the laboratory as follows:

A. 79.56 weight percent deionized water, 0.4 weight percent potassium citrate and 0.05 weight percent Bitrex were combined with 0.09 weight percent FD&C Red #40 (1.0% in water), 0.03 weight percent D&C Red #33 (1.0% in water) and 0.02 eight percent FD&C Yellow #5 (1.0% in water). The resultant solution was mixed until it appeared clear.

B. 0.80 weight percent KelcoGel gellan gum was dispersed into the colored water solution, and the resulting dispersion heated to a temperature of about 75° C. with stirring until the dispersion became clear, then cooled to a temperature of about 60° C.

C. 0.05 weight percent Rohm & Haas Kathon was added to the aqueous gum dispersion with stirring until the mixture because clear, while maintaining the temperature of the mixture at about 60° C.;

D. A fragrance solution was prepared by combining 6.0 weight percent Rohm & Haas Triton X-102 surfactant, 5.0 weight percent fragrance oils, 3.0 weight percent alcohol 40–2 and 5.0 weight percent dipropylene glycol with stirring until the solution was clear.

E. The aqueous gum dispersion and the fragrance solution were mixed and blended until the mixture was uniform in appearance, avoiding air entrapment. The resultant mixture was opaque upon initial blending at a temperature greater than about 55° C., but became clear as the temperature approached about 50° C.

F. The resultant mixture was poured into a container having a capacity of about one-fourth pint until the container was about ¾ full. The container was placed into a chilling unit to begin setting up the gel. When an acceptable level of gel viscosity was reached (e.g., upon reaching a at a temperature of about 38° C. to about 40° C.), about 10 grams sliced peaches were added. The balance of the container was then filled with liquified gel which was allowed to set.

The gel product typically is packaged in a sealed container with a removable lid. When the lid is removed, the volatile components of the gel evaporate and the fragrance is dispersed into the air over a period of time. The volatile constituents of the gel may evaporate over a period from about two weeks to about three months, and particularly from about twenty to about forty-five days, with the most desired period being about thirty days. The uniform distribution of the fragrance within the gel aids in dispersion of the fragrance into the air at the desired rate.

As the volatile components evaporate, the gel will shrink until, eventually, only a residue of essentially nonvolatile components will remain. The fragrance-dispersing capability of the composition will diminish as the proportion of volatile components decreases. The shrinkage of the gel therefore provides a user with an visual indication of when a new supply is needed.

Although a specific embodiment of the invention has been described herein in detail, it is understood that variations may be made thereto by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit of the invention or the scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. An air freshener, comprising:

a container;

a transparent, shiny, aqueous gel, said gel being capable of dispersing volatile components into the air over a predetermined time and thereby imparting a fragrance to the air, said gel being in said container and including a major amount of water, 0.1 to 15 weight percent microemulsified fragrance oil dispersed in the gel such that no phase separation is visible in the container, 0.5 to 20 weight percent nonionic surfactant, 0.05 to 10 weight percent gelling agent, 0.1 to 33 weight percent co-solvent for the fragrance oil, an aversive agent, 0.001 to 15 weight percent crosslinking agent, said gel being free from visible particles and inhomogeneities; and

at least one color-fast and ornamental botanical suspended within said transparent gel in said container, said botanical being selected from the group consisting of; berries, slices of fruit, leaves, seeds, flowers, sprigs, branchlets and Queen Anne's lace.

2. The air freshener according to claim **1**, wherein said gel comprises a modified polysaccharide.

3. The air freshener according to claim **1**, wherein said gel comprises a cationically crosslinked modified polysaccharide.

4. The air freshener according to claim **1**, including a coloring agent in the gel.

5. The air freshener according to claim **4**, including at least one of a microbiocide, an aversive agent, denatured alcohol, and preservative in the gel.

6. The air freshener according to claim **1**, wherein said container is transparent so that the botanical is visible through said container and said gel.

7. The air freshener according to claim **1**, wherein said botanical is at least one of: selected to appear natural; and treated to maintain natural appearance after being emersed in said transparent gel.

8. The air freshener according to claim **7**, wherein the selection includes selecting botanicals without dyes and preservatives.

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